

Report on the 2002 Naval Reserve Religious Ministry Workshop

by CDR Barry Crane, CHC, USNR



Unprecedented is perhaps the best description of the four-day event that took place in January at the Sheraton New Orleans Hotel. For the first time in the history of the Navy Chaplain Corps, a Religious Ministry Workshop included an invitation to **all** Reserve Chaplains and RPs, including those in

Voluntary Training Unit (VTU) status. Indeed, with over 300 participants, this may have been the largest gathering of Chaplains and RPs in history. This event was the realization of a vision held by Chaplain Darold Bigger, Assistant to the Chief of Chaplains for Reserve Matters, since the time he assumed office. Chaplain Moses Stith and the staff at MARFORRES provided



Chaplain Darold Bigger addresses the workshop.

marvelous support in handling the logistical responsibilities for this significant gathering.

The training agenda on Sunday, 13 January, was devoted to issues concerning the Religious Program Specialist rating. RPCM Matthew Bremer, Senior Enlisted Advisor (RP) for the Naval Reserve, Senior Chief Kevin Hendrickson (COMNAVRESFOR), and Senior Chief Tony Childers (MARFORRES), briefed the RPs in attendance on issues affecting the rating.

On Monday, COMNAVRESFOR Chaplain Marty Stahl, addressed the combined gathering. Powerful and timely presentations were also given by Chaplains Randy Cash and Abuhena Saiful Islam. Chaplain Cash described the importance of the chaplain's role in Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW). Chaplain Saiful Islam, one of three Islamic chaplains in the Navy, shared the

tenets of Islam and gave perspective on the situation in Afghanistan. He was on his way to temporary duty in Guantanamo Bay where he would be advising the Commander of the Joint Task Force and providing ministry to the detainees held there.

A highlight of the Monday schedule was a celebration of the anniversary of the RP rating. Over 200 chaplains stood and sang *Happy Birthday* to the RPs. The oldest and youngest RPs present were recognized in the time-honored ceremony of cutting the cake.



RP1 James Brown, oldest RP in attendance, cuts the cake.

Deputy Chief of Chaplains Lou Iasiello, spoke to the workshop on Tuesday morning about the important role of the chaplain in the Sea Services. Later that morning, the major training event of the workshop began as the Family Certification Training entitled, *Sharpening Your People Skills*, was given.

On Wednesday morning, those chaplains who would soon be retiring were recognized. These included Chaplains Larry McConnell, Vernon Griffeth, Bob Carpenter, Scott Jurgens, Terry O'Connell and John Shaloub.

The Religious Ministries Workshop was a profound experience for those in attendance. The valuable training, stirring presentations, encouragement in ministry and fellowship with shipmates from across the United States will make this event long-remembered.